



Strategic Plan

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**Submitted to Mr. Robert Sausedo
and
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Executive Summary

Community Build, Inc. (CBI) established in 1992, is dedicated to the revitalization of South Los Angeles through human capital development, community economic development and commercial development.

The Community Response System of South Los Angeles (CRSSLA) was formed due to the impact of COVID-19 and in response to the health, economic and social devastation communities experience as a result of the pandemic. Mr. Robert Sausedo convened a group of local community-based organizations in March of 2020 to address the urgent emerging issues. CRSSLA brought together community organizations, churches, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to identify resources for emergency operations centers, medical care, distribution centers, and to coordinate with various government agencies responsible for deploying resources and information to respond to the pandemic.

The formal meetings of the CRSSLA strategic planning process occurred over two gatherings. Prior to the strategic planning sessions, CRSSLA invited input from community members through a survey. The CRSSLA member survey revealed several important findings about top area of engagement interest, views about the most important role for CRSSLA, perceptions about the top benefits of associating with CRSSLA network and identified challenges.

The purpose of the virtual gatherings of the strategic planning process was to: evaluate CRSSLA's role, assess future challenges, brainstorm ideas and network in affinity groups.

The two community engagement sessions yielded much information for a S.W.O.T. analysis of CRSSLA:

- A primary CRSSLA strength was the ability to help network members to meet their own goals. A network of local stakeholder organizations (system of networks) that is far reaching and powerful, one that benefits small groups.
- The primary weaknesses facing CRSSLA were those of ongoing crisis made worse by COVID-19. Structure of CRSSLA so people can get involved, membership engagement and capacity building.
- The opportunities CRSSLA can take advantage of to position itself for resources to better address crisis and their compounded impact on vulnerable communities due to systemic inequalities.
- The threats relate to our organizational approach. More emphasis needs to be made about the participatory nature of the project and that all of us, the network, own it together.

The strategic plan identifies the scope for a three-year plan (2021, 2022, 2023) pertaining to these organization-wide objectives:

- Provide low-income/homeless persons with information and practical application methods that inform on the seriousness of this pandemic without infusing enhanced fear
- Educate and encourage practices to safeguard individual selves and others from transmission
- Increase capacity of local communities to provide long-term resources that foster sustainability
- Establish a continuum practice to provide growing essential needs of the community
- Offer counseling and coping support to increase resilience in the face of traumatic pressure
- Connect marginalized persons with faith-based organizations, shelters, feeding services and pantries that create a healthier mindset towards community inclusion
- Create organization structure to effectively involve people, nonprofits, businesses
- Create brave spaces for youth and young adult leadership to emerge and thrive in this discipline of saving lives through effective community engagement, science and intersectionality, gender equity

The Community Response System of South Los Angeles Strategic Plan includes a template for CRSSLA leadership to annually review, assess and monitor priorities.

Connected to identified organization-wide objectives, the annual review will help leadership determine progress toward achieving the plan and respond with intermittent corrective actions.

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Organizational Context and History

The vision of CRSSLA:

“To be a collaborative network of community-based organizations, churches and key stakeholders set up as a disaster recovery / response system that utilizes the individual and collective efforts of organizations supporting South Los Angeles.”

The mission of CRSSLA:

“To proactively provide critical response services through education, resources, information, and addressing health needs of the at-risk, low-income, and homeless populations.

Community Build, Inc. (CBI) established in 1992, is dedicated to the revitalization of South Los Angeles through human capital development, community economic development and commercial development. Our unique and comprehensive programs offer wrap-around services for at-risk youth, including those who are out of school, in foster care, involved in gangs, and first-generation college bound youth and families. Since opening our youth center in 1994, we have provided supportive services to over 26,000 youth and young adults. Program activities include case management, peer counseling, life skills, management training, career preparation training, college preparation, college retention, college scholarships, education and career counseling, job development, employment placement, entrepreneurship support, recreation and cultural programs, tutoring, mental health assessment and counseling, homeless prevention and intervention, financial counseling, tattoo removal, gang prevention and intervention, and referrals.

The Community Response System of South Los Angeles (CRSSLA) was formed due to the impact of COVID-19 and in response to the health, economic and social devastation communities experience as a result of the pandemic. Mr. Robert Sausedo convened a group of local community-based organizations in March of 2020 to address the urgent emerging issues. CRSSLA brought together community organizations, churches, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to identify resources for emergency operations centers, medical care, distribution centers, and to coordinate with various government agencies responsible for deploying resources and information to respond to the pandemic.

Environmental Scan

When CRSSLA was formed, a comprehensive emergency planning system for South Los Angeles did not operate. City-led neighborhood emergency groups existed, but during the onset of the pandemic anecdotal evidence gathered through conversations with stakeholders indicated their existence and impact were less well-known in South Los Angeles. And, in instances where community-based organizations were aware of neighborhood emergency groups, their understanding of how to activate them during the pandemic crisis was unclear.

In October 2020, CRSSLA invited members to participate in the strategic plan by completing the CRSSLA Strategic Plan Sign-Up form. The form served as a means to pre-register members, invite

them to participate on organized affinity teams, and to survey their opinions about CRSSLA's importance, benefits, and challenges. The first category encouraged active participation through joining teams.

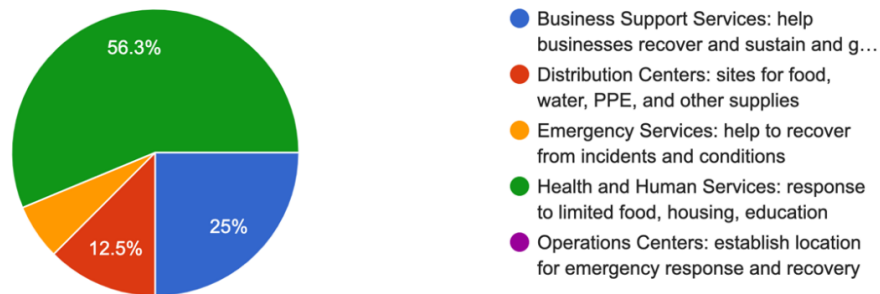
Join a CRSSLA Team

On the question of interest in joining a team (Figure 1), health and human services garnered the most interest (N=9, 56%), while no one showed an interest in operations centers.

Figure 1: Choose a Team

Choose a team: We are forming teams to focus on different activities. Which would you be most interested in or feel you have the most capacity to contribute to?

16 responses



Significance: The category of health and human services appealed to those interested in responding to the limited or lack of food, housing, transportation, education, childcare, and mental health. These reflect concern with how to meet a range of basic needs threatened by the pandemic. It also reflects most respondents felt health and human services was the team they had the most capacity to make meaningful contributions.

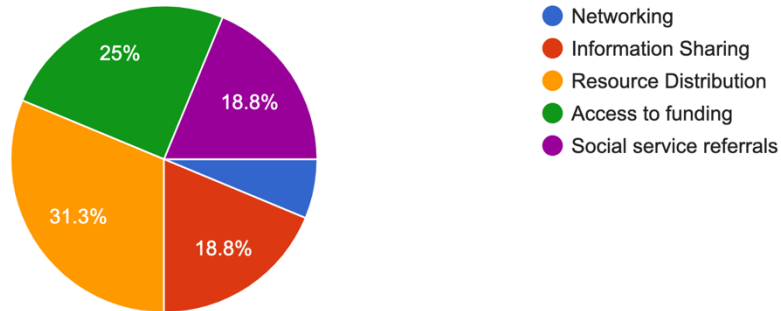
CRSSLA's Most Important Role

On the question of opinion about the most important role for CRSSLA (Figure 2), resource distribution had the most appeal (n=5, 31%), while networking had the lowest response (n=1, 6%).

Figure 2: Role of CRSSLA

What is the most important role for CRSSLA?

16 responses



Significance: The importance members assigned to the role of CRSSLA in resource distribution confirmed an earlier result that prioritized meeting basic needs. One basic need, food insecurity, was addressed when several member organizations distributed resources through drive-in food giveaway events and handed out grocery gift cards. Although networking had the lowest response, the second through fourth highest responses (access to funding, social service referrals, and information sharing) could be interpreted as networking-related activities.

Benefits CRSSLA Provides

The survey also sought to obtain feedback from members about CRSSLA’s benefits (Figure 3). The responses reveal how during the initial months of the pandemic, members perceived the top benefits of CRSSLA were: 1) resources, 2) connections, and 3) community building.

Figure 3: Benefits CRSSLA Provides

CATEGORY	STATEMENT
Resources	<i>CRSSLA provides social service referrals and the ability to have another organization that we can work with to provide resources for families, seniors, returning citizens, and youth/young adults.</i>
Connections	<i>Connecting with other agencies to provide more coordinated resources for our community</i>
Community building	<i>Employment, resources and community building</i>

Significance: Results indicate respondents found CRSSLA to be a benefit to their constituencies because this association led to more social services, resource coordination, and the opportunity for community building through means such as employment.

CRSSLA's Challenges

When asked about challenges, respondents were concerned about uncertain social impacts of the pandemic as well as potential programming difficulties facing the CRSSLA project (Figure 4). Respondents shared concerns about challenges facing CRSSLA operationally and as a conduit for activities designed to have social impact.

Figure 4: Challenges



The CRSSLA project was founded in response to the pandemic. Several months in, members expressed views about the project's ability to keep the network engaged and as energized about the work as they had been at the beginning of the pandemic. A related concern was evident in responses about conditions external to CRSSLA's operational challenges. Members said it would be challenging for CRSSLA to remain relevant in the face of uncertainty about the guidelines for mandated closures and reopening of schools and businesses.

Respondents also shared their concern about the challenges facing CRSSLA related to accomplishing strategic planning and its capacity to achieve sustainable outcomes. *Significance:* The importance of findings about challenges is that respondents were concerned about the sustainability of a project born of crisis after the urgent pandemic response subsided.

The member survey established topics CRSSLA staff could probe more deeply during the strategic planning sessions. The survey also reinforced the importance of creating an opportunity for members to express their opinions and actively participate in planning for CRSSLA's future. They became stakeholders and this built trust between CRSSLA and the community for the ensuing S.W.O.T. (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis.

Planning Overview and Process

The formal meetings of the CRSSLA strategic planning process occurred over two gatherings. Prior to the strategic planning sessions, CRSSLA invited input from community members through a survey. Survey data was collected from key informants (n=13) during October and November 2020. CRSSLA held the first of two virtual events in November 2020 to seek input from community voices within our South Los Angeles network. Five (5) attendees participated representing health and human services, business and arts agencies and causes. The survey and community voices events set the stage for CRSSLA's second virtual event held in December 2020. This event involved eight (8) CRSSLA executives and advisors representing diverse business and nonprofit voices to bring in the perspective of executives and decisionmakers.

The purpose of the virtual gatherings was to: evaluate CRSSLA's role, assess future challenges, brainstorm ideas and network in affinity groups. The mission of CRSSLA is to "proactively provide services through education, resources, information and addressing health needs of the at-risk, low-income, and homeless populations." The process began with Robert Sausedo and the CRSSLA leadership team of seven (7) members establishing a strategic planning framework to guide key informant selection (community, executive) and the day's agendas. The agenda consisted of:

- Strategic plan session purpose
- CRSSLA activities to date, network survey results
- Strategic plan community/executive engagement process: establish community agreements, power analysis exercise, engagement (S.W.O.T. analysis), reflection
- Call to action
- dismissal

The recap of CRSSLA's activities to date (CRSSLA's) included: sharing information about funding opportunities, job opportunities, case management training, food distribution, personal protective equipment (PPE) distribution and education, counseling and other resources.

Those activities encompassed: a) referrals to individual and family counseling sessions, health resources for COVID-19 testing, medical care, financial services, and job opportunities; b) distribution of gift cards and computers; and c) case management training for service providers in education and other nonprofit fields.

The intentional nature of the gathering of community members was to build consensus by declaring "community agreements." The gathering of executives was of shorter duration (1 ½ hours) and a blanket statement to encourage collegiality was made. The community agreements decided by participants in the community strategic plan session, which was held for a longer duration (2 ½ hours), were:

Figure 5: Community Agreements

- ~ Talk one at a time
- ~ Assume everyone has good intentions
- ~ Agree to disagree, be respectful
- ~ Step up, step back to be mindful of space you're taking up
- ~ Everyone's opinion has value, value what other persons are saying
- ~ Have an open mind
- ~ Start and end on time
- ~ Solutions oriented, missions-focused, stay on task
- ~ Limit cell phone use; try to be fully present
- ~ Check your technology values related to cell phone use, computer, background noise, how you present self on camera, etc.
- ~ Mindful that some have children, families that might require interruptions

Significance: Community agreements were intended to help the group agree on a way to commit to one another during the sessions. The statements reinforced the importance of showing one another respect when differences of opinion emerged and to conscientiously minimize disruptive behavior in the virtual environment.

S.W.O.T. Analysis

Figure 5: CRSSLA S.W.O.T. Analysis

Analysis of Organizational Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T.)



Overview: The CRSSLA team approached each session to gather information for the S.W.O.T. analysis with Dr. Lezlee Matthews facilitating and Robert Sausedo and Cheryl Branch contributing background about CRSSLA’s background and purpose. Participants were then encouraged to respond to relevant prompts.

Summary of Strengths

1. Leadership innovation.
2. A network of local stakeholder organizations (system of networks) that is far reaching and powerful, one that benefits small groups.
3. Connections to other organizations yield resources and funds, plus build relationships with government & educational institutions.
4. Credibility with known organizations and with CRSSLA as orgs individually and collectively.
5. Validation for emerging organizations to get known for others to have greater awareness about them.
6. A unique channel for information and communications, that is to receive information about resources that they would not necessarily have received without being a part of CRSSLA.

Discussion: The sessions revealed a primary CRSSLA **strength** to be the ability to help network members to meet their own goals. This is accomplished through referrals and connections. Members appreciated the involvement of USC and CRSSLA to conduct a survey of agencies to determine what their needs and resources they sought to address community concerns. Some organizations reported increased access to financial support and other resources, especially personal protective equipment and food.

Summary of Weaknesses

1. Systemic racism and inequality leading to health and education disparities, impacting Black/Brown populations
2. Structure of CRSSLA so people can get involved, membership engagement and capacity building
3. A lack of availability of Spanish language translation in materials, no bilingual services available during meetings

Discussion: The primary **weaknesses** facing CRSSLA were those of ongoing crisis made worse by COVID-19. The crisis that existing in healthcare access and educational attainment, for example, were evident before the pandemic. These systemic concerns will require CRSSLA to develop long-term potential solutions. Any solutions will require CRSSLA to examine its human and financial capacity. Respondents wondered if CRSSLA would have access to the necessary funding to carry out the work. Then, there was the issue of how to better utilize the network when people felt unsure how to engage with the CRSSLA network after attending meetings. CRSSLA needs to find a way to share expertise of people who are already doing the kind of work to help meet community needs. This will take better approaches to involving people and pointing them to resources in the right places.

Summary of Opportunities:

1. Activate organizations that have one focus or specialization to make referrals to others.
2. Develop an expertise in rapid response and the ability react in times of crisis.
3. Create a plan for sustainability, one that can aid the organization to evolve and attract funding
4. Adapt operational processes to meet the purpose of related issues of anti-racism, public health promotion, and homelessness.

Discussion: The **opportunities** CRSSLA could take advantage of including positioning itself for resources to better address crisis and their compounded impact on vulnerable communities due to systemic inequalities. The Strategic Plan could provide the structure for people to plug in and satisfy goals related to organizational sustainability and access to increased funding.

This may take some steps to rethink how CRSSLA evolves and thereby transforms itself in the future. Preparing for such a future can be rooted in research. One suggestion was to look at mistakes and success of other crisis and government response, as in the case of Hurricane Katrina and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). CRSSLA is well positioned to tap into academic institutions more deeply to answer questions about what happened in South Los Angeles during the pandemic as compared to other places impacted by natural, human or public health disasters. CRSSLA can refine its approach by determining which of two paths of response: natural disaster response vs social natural resource or human welfare response. And, in the event CRSSLA decides both, determine the appropriate process to respond to each.

Summary of Threats

1. How to keep momentum because COVID may be with us another year
2. How to sustain resource and relevance when pandemic is over
3. Liability and indemnification; risk assessment to collaboration
4. Funding availability and coordination across agencies

Discussion: The **threats** relate to our organizational approach. CRSSLA has meetings but are not bringing people who are in leadership especially executive directors, business owners. There is also a deficiency in terms of bringing in policy experts and funding dollars related to trends, technology and automation. There is a perception that mid-level managers participated in greater numbers in meetings.

Participants suggested the need to have a place for the community to engage with CRSSLA but guide their participation through ideas generated by high level thinkers and decisionmakers. The engagement with such executives could take the form of monthly meetings with only executive directors and business leaders. There was also a concern that general meetings look like Community Build, Inc. (CBI) instead of a collaboration. More emphasis needs to be made about the participatory nature of the project and that all of us, the network, own it together. This would ameliorate the perception that CBI and the collaborators in the network, are all going after the same money. In the eventual circumstance that partners collaborate and mix

funds, liability issues may loom large. Each partner should review their own internal/external resources and determine which can be deployed.

The SWOT analysis reveals answers to several questions about CRSSLA’s future. Based on the assessment, background documents¹, and general and leadership team meeting notes the organization’s ideal business model in 3 years is captured.

The model explores facets of CRSSLA scope pertaining to six areas: geography, target demographic, programs, funding sources, staff, and areas of other aspirations.

Figure 6: CRSSLA 3-Year Projection

Scope	Includes	Doesn't Include	Comments
Geography	Greater Los Angeles County with a focus on South Los Angeles	Prioritization of areas outside of South Los Angeles, though those areas may also be serviced	SPA 6; Strong ties with Council District 8 and Council District 9; City of Los Angeles; Supervisorial District 2; LAUSD School Board District 1.
Target Demographic	<p>Service: Low-to-moderate income individuals; Gender 40% male, 60% female; Ethnicity 60% African American, 40% Latino</p> <p>Membership: Executive Directors, business owners, policy experts</p> <p>Membership categories: Members, Affiliate partners, Legacy partners, Founding partners, Co-Founders CBI/LAM, Resources</p>	Does not include significant outreach to Latin-x and bilingual Spanish speaking community	<p>Emphasis placed on black community, but partners ask about services for Latin-x and bilingual Spanish speaking community</p> <p>Lack clarity whether demographic unit of analysis is based on population or organization (nonprofit, business) status</p> <p>Impact Report data reports members: 88 organizations and individuals</p>

¹ Basic Framework for Proposals (March 2020), CRSSLA Case Statement (March 2020), CRSSLA Project Outline (August 2020).

<p>Programs</p>	<p>Food, water and necessary staples 2) Affinity Teams -Team B: Business support services for small and medium size firms -Team D: Distribution centers (DC) -Team E: Emergency operations centers (EOC), public safety -Team H: Health and human services (includes mental health professionals) Team O: Operations centers, Medical triage centers (MT), Command Centers (CT) 3) Ongoing local communications strategies 4) Charitytracker.com 5) Emergency Plans</p>	<p>Does not add burdensome data collection and reporting requirements</p>	<p>Teams engagement model has imprecise alignment with certain categories of emergency and recovery model</p>
<p>Funding Sources</p>	<p>CBI & LAM; Partner resources include grants from USC, City National Bank, Blue Shield of California, Comerica Bank, Union Bank; Large government agency funding for COVID-19 related grants/loans including PPP, EIDL, County of LA Emergency Funding, California State Fund Grants; and foundation support from Kaiser Permanente.</p>	<p>Does not include overreliance on any single funding sector, instead pursues diverse funding sources</p>	<p>Unclear whether CRSSLA wants more or less reliance on government funding</p>
<p>Staff</p>	<p>CBI staff & consultants, LAM staff & faith-based volunteers, USC graduate students</p>	<p>Does not include prohibitions against stipends for interns or volunteers</p>	<p>Organizational chart needed</p>

Other (aspirations)	Policies and procedures guiding organization, governance, technology infrastructure	Does not include preference for CRSSLA’s structure as a project of CBI versus as a separately incorporated nonprofit with 501(c)3 designation	Some in-process (communications, subcommittee guidelines, website), while others underdeveloped (operations, governance including internal policies related to communication, transparency, and attendance)
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CRSSLA Objectives

The next area of examination is an organization-wide brainstorm of objectives exploring two key themes: 1) ideas for how CRSSLA can be successful in achieving its objectives and 2) key results associated with those objectives.

Figure 7: Organization-Wide Objectives

Organization-Wide Objective	Ideas for how we can be successful in achieving this objective - strategies	Key results associated with this objective – benchmarks for progress
Provide low-income/homeless persons with information and practical application methods that inform on the seriousness of this pandemic without infusing enhanced fear	1) Workforce development through education to get schools back on-line	Households will maintain paychecks and maintain their income during this COVID-19 crisis
Educate and encourage practices to safeguard individual selves and others from transmission	1) Connect universities to each other; academic sharing of best practices 2) Use interns to help booking, transfer to virtual format, aid specific programs 3) Call on CBO leaders to urge vaccinations, testing 4) CRSSLA can lend support on messaging; inform around vaccination, pandemic and health disparity 5) Help agencies write Emergency Plans	1) Maintain high performing in emergency service delivery and maintaining consistency in safe distancing of 6 feet, hand washing while providing essential services 2) Submit CAL OES application to State 3) Assist 20 organizations to write Emergency Plans

<p>Increase capacity of local communities to provide long-term resources that foster sustainability</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Disseminate information broadly and quickly through the partners 2) Data system 3) Bridge larger partners to community (Charles Drew, Urban League) 4) Break through barriers (red tape) that usually prevent from working together 5) Earmark grants for businesses for black-owned businesses 	<p>Develop partnership agreement between CRSSLA.org/CBI and describe the partners level of affiliation with CRSSLA.org (i.e. MOU, Partnership, Paid, non-paid, Membership, Affiliate etc.)</p>
<p>Establish a continuum practice to provide growing essential needs of the community</p>	<p>1)interview people to see what the needs are (convene meeting of business leaders)</p>	<p>Facilitate a roundtable community conversation (modeled after THE); encourage neutral sharing information about available resources, not connected to money</p>
<p>Offer counseling and coping support to increase resilience in the face of traumatic pressure</p>	<p>1)Cultivate information relevant to public health concept “saving lives through effective community engagement</p>	<p>Develop speaker series structure content relevant to executive directors, business owners</p>
<p>Connect marginalized persons with faith-based organizations, shelters, feeding services and pantries that create a healthier mindset towards community inclusion</p>	<p>Look to CRSSLA membership to come in, be trained and deliver message to constituencies, community members</p>	<p>Adopt www.charitytracker.net (or equivalent), train members to use and generate data to use for reports</p>
<p>Create organization structure to effectively involve people, nonprofits, businesses</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Structure into Teams 2) Develop procedures to guide team activities 3) Develop internal policies related to communication, transparency, and attendance 4) Make CRSSLA a nonprofit or own platform with CBI as the fiscal agent 	<p>Create fully developed community response system agency for South Los Angeles with focus on early warning, preparedness, and response</p>

CRSSLA Priorities Annual Review Template

The CRSSLA leadership team is encouraged to self-evaluate the pace of implementation of the 3-year plan, related objectives-strategies, and results or benchmarks for progress. The evaluation of previously identified objectives could explore topics on a range of criteria, with each ranked from 1-10, with 10 being greatest, to guide the team in determining priorities associated with those objectives. The template for such an analysis is included below in Figure 8 and can be presented as a survey tailored to the organization-wide objectives identified in Figure 7.

Figure 8: Ranking CRSSLA’s Priorities

List each objective below	Potential impact on our organization's mission and outcomes	Urgency to complete this upcoming year (1-10)	Likelihood it can be achieved in the upcoming year with existing team and resources (1-10)	Measurability (1-10)	Total

The initial process of determining priorities may proceed on multiple fronts. It is likely objectives associated with meeting urgent needs of those in crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be implemented simultaneously by CRSSLA leadership as it shores up operations and secures additional necessary funding.

Summary

The formal meetings of the CRSSLA strategic planning process occurred over two gatherings. Prior to the strategic planning sessions, CRSSLA invited input from community members through a survey. Survey data was collected from key informants during October and November 2020. CRSSLA then held two virtual strategic planning sessions to gather input from community and executives or advisors within our South Los Angeles network.

The CRSSLA member survey revealed several important findings about top area of engagement interest, views about the most important role for CRSSLA, perceptions about the top benefits of associating with CRSSLA network and identified challenges. The category of health and human services had the most appeal to those interested in responding to the limited or lack of food, housing, transportation, education, childcare, and mental health. These reflect concern with how to meet a range of basic needs threatened by the pandemic. The importance members assigned to the role of CRSSLA in resource distribution confirmed an earlier result that prioritized meeting basic needs. Results indicate respondents found CRSSLA to be a benefit to their constituencies because this association led to more social services, resource coordination, and the opportunity for community building through means such as employment. The importance of findings about challenges is that respondents were concerned about the sustainability of a project born of crisis after the urgent pandemic response subsided.

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The strategic plan identifies the scope for a three-year plan pertaining to these organization-wide objectives: Provide low-income/homeless persons with information and practical application methods that inform on the seriousness of this pandemic without infusing enhanced fear; Educate and encourage practices to safeguard individual selves and others from transmission; Increase capacity of local communities to provide long-term resources that foster sustainability; Establish a continuum practice to provide growing essential needs of the community; Offer counseling and coping support to increase resilience in the face of traumatic pressure; Connect marginalized persons with faith-based organizations, shelters, feeding services and pantries that create a healthier mindset towards community inclusion; and, Create organization structure to effectively involve people, nonprofits, businesses.

Ultimately, the plan includes a template for CRSSLA leadership to annually review, assess and monitor priorities. Connected to the aforementioned organization-wide objectives, the annual review helps leadership determine progress toward achieving the plan and respond with intermittent corrective actions.

Acknowledgements

Strategic Plan Key Informants²

Cheryl Branch, Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches/CRSSLA Co-Founder⁺

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Appendix A

CRSSLA Strategic Plan Sign-Up [[survey form](#)]

² *Community session, ⁺Executive Advisory session, [◇]Community Strategic Plan Survey